THE

AERONAUT.

No. 176. — August 6. 1818.

ALCANDRIANA.

NO. IV.

A considerable interval has now elapsed since we discontinued the selection from the writings of Alcander, in the fifth volume of our lucubrations. We present in this number the first of several more finished pieces than those which have already been given. They appear to have been written chiefly in an essay form, and were

probably intended for publication at some future period.

I AM accustomed, when the evenings are pleasant, to stroll out towards the country, about the time when all begins to be quiet, and the clear, but soothing silence of nature is spread around. On these occasions I love to collect my scattered thoughts, to muse upon past recollections, or to make my calculations for future employment. I feel as it were relieved from the world, and holding communion with mind alone; although the painful recollections of memory too often convince me that I have yet much to do with earth, and much to suffer in this mortal state of sorrow and of disappointment. Alas! how the spirit is trammelled by these bonds of clay,—these fetters that drag it down to grovel in the dust! How hope, and ardor, and genius, and fancy, bow before the humiliating memento that is ever before our eyes and in our hearts, that

here below they must be restrained, bound down to the 'beggarly elements' of perishable matter, and made the slaves of earthly propensities and selfish desires!

The other evening I went on one of my customary walks, allured by the mournful beauties of the sky. I wandered long, and far. Without a human eye to mark my footsteps, I gazed upon the lovely heavens with feelings almost amounting to rapture. The breeze was fresh, and drove the careering clouds in many a wild and fantastic form across the azure vault above. In that deep blue sea floated the moon, full, bright, and glorious. I felt an unutterable thrill of melancholy pleasure as I watched her struggling with the billowy forms that were fringed with the beams of her pure and mellow lustre. It was an hour of sadness; and the lines of a nameless bard returned to my memory —

"It was an hour for one to mourn
In heart — in hopes — in love, forlorn,
By sorrow's rending anguish torn,
And wrung by misery;
When every sound that meets the ear
Is sweetly sad, and brightly drear, —
When all above, and all below,
Pour their deep thrill on heart of woe;

As oft there gleams a mournful glow
Upon the darkest torrent's flow,
To soothe & cheer the eye,
With its half lost, & dubious ray,
Lingering upon the restless spray,
As fleets the current by." —

And yet there was a species of delight in the contemplation, which happier hearts than mine might have enjoyed. The variegated shadows — the dark waving of the woods — the blessed light on high — the moon & stars riding in tranquil majesty — afforded employment to the feelings alike of the happy and the miserable.[a] Were the wanderer one who had tasted of the cup of sorrow, and whose past recollections were filled with anguish, he might look on the shades beneath — a-

[a] Upon the perusal of Alexander's description of the effects of moonlight, we were somewhat struck with the coincidence of feeling and expression with a passage of a late novelist. We quote the passage. "Nature", says he, "in all its rich and exhaustless luxuriance, has nothing to the eye or to the soul so delicious as the mild splendor of moonlight, shed over the darkness of a forest. There is darkness beneath for the unhappy to muse — there is light above for the happy to gaze on — and

round him, and feel that they sympathised with the sadness of his heart. He might hear the murmurs of departed hours in the solemn whispers of the breeze; he might see the darkness of the present in the deep black shadows of the grove. He might behold his changeful life, his many colored destiny in the light and shade that alternately flickered the dark outlines of the trees; and cast his trembling and tearful eye on the moon, as she rode mocking his vision with the dream of happiness, clear — bright — beautiful — but beyond his reach. Were he one who was happy — over whose form and prospects the blighting whirlwind of sorrow had never past — or if it had, who had renewed his strength, and basked in the beams of joy — all was calculated to add to his delight. From the shadows below, he could look upward to

the trembling gleams between the branches give a strong image of life, chequered indeed with fitful and precarious lustre, but of which the predominant image is gloom — diversified, but essential."—

Women. Vol. 2. —

the lustre above, where the shadows & darkness of earth had no place. The ethereal radiance that was shining there, might by its ~~be~~ contrast with the gloom below, lift up his eye and his heart to the contemplation of all that was happy and joyous.

It is in this manner that I would account for the various effects of moonlight upon different people. It is equally suited to the happy and the unhappy, and is described as sad or cheerful, solely according to the feeling and temperament of the observer.

For my own part, I experienced many mingled emotions. The moon was glorious beyond description; but her beams, as they were shed over the mild & softened face of nature, reminded me of other days, and friends long since lost to me on earth. I recalled many a scene that was once delightful, but whose swift and total loss oppressed me with a sensation of hopeless anguish. I thought on many a perished heart, and it seemed as if the faces & the forms of beings once loved

but lost, denied to sight though still remembered and cherished, were rising in the yellow tide of heavenly light. O! if memory ever mingles its joys and its sorrows, it is in such an hour as this. If ever grief has its luxuriance, if ever a withering heart feels the deep thrill of present pain & remembered pleasure, it is when earth and heaven look thus sad and beautiful. The past, the present, and the future — the scenes we regret — the sorrows we lament — the prospect we dread — all are crowded into one intense, suffering point; all are absorbed into one grand, predominant feeling — a feeling for which we ourselves can scarcely assign a cause, and which exists without any distinct reason ~~[illegible]~~ for its force or ~~[illegible]~~ being.

As I continued my walk, my thoughts following the direction of my eyes, began to picture the probable state of that luminary whose beauty is so pleasing here. Perhaps, I thought, as I marked its sad and tremulous light, it is the abode of beings ~~sad like~~ melancholy like me, and plunged in one continued scene

of mourning and pain. The hills and vales that astronomers love to describe may be peopled with wandering forms of woe, and may only echo the notes of complaint. And yet, I thought, that lovely orb must have happier beings. Perhaps those who have mourned on earth are there permitted to rove in sweet and tranquil joy: Or it is the abode of beings, who have never known the sorrows we experience, but pass on their days in the mild serenity of unclouded bliss.

Fatigued with these wild and fanciful conjectures, I returned to my solitary chamber; and the images that had filled my mind giving a hue and coloring to my dreams, I fancied, as I slept, that I was transported by some unknown means, to the orb I had been observing. I thought there was one mild and mellow light shed over the whole, brighter than moon-lit night on earth, but without the gorgeous splendor of the solar radiance. The vales were quiet, and the hills were sleeping in profound repose. By the banks of a stream, whose low

murmurs seemed to my ears like the murmurs of a well remembered stream, far, far away. I beheld several forms seated ~~in~~ on the margin, and as I approached, heard the soft sound of etherial music, that died upon the air, and wound along the streams & hills. The strain was melancholy beyond the power of language to express it. It reminded me of things which I had almost forgotten, and filled my heart with a delicious sensation, where the pain of past remembrance was quenched in an unaccountable pleasure as these awakened recollections recurred. I drew nearer; and to my surprise, beheld them all with countenances perfectly answering to their music, in which, though melancholy was predominant, yet it seemed so mixed with other feelings, as to cast a gleam of joy over every feature. As I looked on these lovely forms, I recognised the faces of those whom I had formerly known on earth, who were distinguished by the sadness of their lot, or who had

been ~~[struck]~~ united with me in the events of my short, but ill-starred life. There was one in particular, whom I loved — and lost — and mourned. She hailed me to this abode of tranquil joy. As she spoke, the melancholy song again took up its strain, and immediately * "These are they," said my conductress, "who through much sorrow have past the vale of tears. The dark valley is ~~[struck]~~ seen no more; the shades of death are dissipated. O beloved — once in vain — now for ever — welcome to this bright and blessed abode, where no ~~[struck]~~ woe again shall blight, nor sorrow curse!"—

As she spoke, her countenance glowed with celestial glory. I felt my heart throb in violent agitation; but as I strove to clasp her renovated form to that delighted heart, the effort destroyed the charm; I woke, and the moon was just setting in the distant west, leaving the world & me to darkness & to silence.

(E.)